

Trafficking in Persons report 2013

MAURITIUS (Tier 2)

Mauritius is a source country for children and, to a much lesser extent, men and women subjected primarily to sex trafficking, but also to forced labor. Secondary school-age girls and, in fewer numbers, younger girls from all areas of the country, including from Rodrigues Island, are induced into prostitution, often by their peers, family members, or by businessmen offering other forms of employment. NGOs report that girls are also sold into prostitution by family members or forced into the sex trade in exchange for food and shelter. Taxi drivers provide transportation and introductions for both the girls and the clients. Girls and boys whose mothers engage in prostitution reportedly are vulnerable to being forced into prostitution at a young age. There are reports that some women addicted to drugs are forced into prostitution by their boyfriends, who act as their pimps. In recent years, small numbers of Mauritian adults have been identified as trafficking victims in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Canada. Mauritius' manufacturing and construction sectors employ approximately 30,000 foreign migrant workers from India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar. Although there were no confirmed cases to date of workers subjected to conditions of forced labor within Mauritius, some migrant workers have reported conditions indicative of forced labor, including passport confiscation, underpayment of wages, substandard living conditions, and threats of deportation. Malagasy women reportedly transit Mauritius *en route* to employment as domestic workers in Lebanon, where some were subsequently subjected to conditions of forced labor. In 2011 and 2012, Cambodian men were identified as victims of forced labor on fishing boats in Mauritius' territorial waters. The Government of Mauritius does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. During the reporting period, the government failed to demonstrate sufficient progress in its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. For example, the government failed to institute any proactive measures to address the forced prostitution of women. Furthermore, the government's protection efforts remained solely focused on child sex trafficking, with no identification of, or adequate assistance provided to, any adult victims, despite the identification of Cambodian men in forced labor by an international organization for a second consecutive reporting period. The government increased coordination efforts among law enforcement entities through the formation of various multidisciplinary teams that coordinated cases involving children as victims of trafficking and related crimes. It also maintained its funding for victims services, identified and cared for 12 victims of child prostitution, and continued awareness campaigns in schools and villages.

Recommendations for Mauritius: Utilize anti-trafficking legislation to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including in cases involving forced labor or adult women exploited in forced prostitution; ensure that law enforcement entities increase coordination with NGOs or international organizations on cases involving foreign trafficking victims aboard foreign fishing boats in Mauritius' territorial waters; establish procedures to guide officials in the proactive identification of victims of trafficking among at-risk populations, including women in prostitution and migrant workers; and initiate efforts to address the issue of Mauritian men engaging in child sex tourism abroad.

Prosecution

The Mauritian government demonstrated decreased antitrafficking law enforcement efforts during the reporting period. The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 prohibits all forms of trafficking of adults and children and prescribes penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment for convicted offenders. In addition, the Child Protection Act of 2005 prohibits all forms of child trafficking and prescribes punishment of up to 15 years' imprisonment; the Judicial Provisions Act of 2008 increased the maximum prescribed punishment for child trafficking offenses to 30 years' imprisonment. All of the aforementioned penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. During the reporting period, the government initiated seven prosecutions and obtained seven convictions of trafficking offenders. All seven cases involved the prostitution of children. There is no indication that any cases have been brought involving adult victims in Mauritius. The government has never taken any law enforcement action against labor trafficking offenses, including against forced labor on fishing boats in Mauritius' territorial waters. The Minors Brigade of the Mauritian police force continued to maintain a database of all trafficking incidents involving children. The police training school provided training to approximately 200 new police recruits specifically on trafficking in persons as part of their basic training requirements. The government did not report any investigations or prosecutions of public officials for alleged complicity in trafficking-related offenses during the reporting period; however, after his government waived relevant immunity, a Mauritian diplomat in the United States pled guilty to failing to pay a domestic worker the legally required minimum hourly and overtime wages and agreed to pay a significant fine and more than \$20,000 in restitution to the victim.

Protection

The government sustained protection of child sex trafficking victims during the reporting period, but failed to identify or provide adequate protective services to victims of other forms of trafficking. Although it identified 12 child sex trafficking victims in 2012, it did not identify any adult victims or labor trafficking victims. An international organization identified four Cambodian men as victims of forced labor on fishing boats in Mauritius' territorial waters; nonetheless, the government did not provide the victims with appropriate services. The Minors Brigade systematically referred all cases of identified children in prostitution to the Child Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development, and Family Welfare (MOGE) for assistance. CDU officials referred an unknown number of abused and exploited children to two NGOs running multipurpose shelters for care; the government provided the equivalent of approximately \$200 per month for each child that the shelters accepted. It also encouraged the placement of trafficking victims in foster homes for long-term shelter. Victims received medical and psychological assistance regardless of whether they resided in a shelter, in foster care, or with relatives. In 2012, the MOGE provided the equivalent of approximately \$59,000 to fund the operation of an NGO run drop-in center for sexually abused children that provided counseling to girls in prostitution, and advertised its services through a toll-free number and community outreach; the center counseled two victims of child prostitution during the reporting period. The MOGE completed construction of a residential center at Grande Rivière North West - at a cost equivalent to approximately \$772,000 - to provide care for victims of child prostitution; however, the center was not yet operational during the reporting period. Children victimized in prostitution were accompanied to the hospital by a child welfare officer, and police worked in conjunction with this officer to obtain statements from the children. Medical treatment

and psychological support were readily available at public clinics and NGO run centers in Mauritius. The government encouraged child victims' assistance in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking crimes, and ensured that identified victims were not incarcerated inappropriately, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

Prevention

The government sustained efforts to prevent the sex trafficking of children and reduce the demand for commercial sex acts during the year. Over 150 government officials and employees participated in a foreign government-funded training program focused on protecting child victims and witnesses in prosecutions. In June 2012, as a direct result of this training, the government demonstrated increased anti-trafficking coordination through the formation of various multidisciplinary teams that focused coordinated efforts on cases of child trafficking and related crimes; these teams were comprised of police, MOGE officials, prosecutors, child psychologists, investigators, and NGO social workers. The police Family Protection Unit and the Minors Brigade continued public awareness campaigns on child abuse and child rights at schools and community centers that included information on the dangers and consequences of engaging in prostitution. The government did not report any efforts to reduce the demand of Mauritian nationals engaging in child sex tourism abroad. There were reports that Mauritian men engaged in child sex tourism in Madagascar during the reporting period, although it is unclear whether the government was aware of such cases. The Ministry of Labor, Industrial Relations and Employment conducted vocational training programs to prevent employment of underage children; however, the government did not demonstrate any discernible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor during the reporting period.